

4739 -
A FAITHFUL
NARRATIVE
OF A REMARKABLE
VISITATION.

BY A
PHYSICIAN.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY JAMES PHILLIPS,
IN GEORGE-YARD, LOMBARD-STREET.

M. DCC. LXXVI.



A FAITHFUL

NARRATIVE.

ON the 8th day of the seventh month, called July, in the year 1754, being very weak in body, after a dangerous fever, at six in the morning, I perceived that something extraordinary was about to agitate my mind.

Conscious of my own weakness, and fearful of being deceived, I determined to minute down in writing every thing that should happen, together with the exact time to be noted by my watch, which I placed on the table before me for this purpose, in order that whatsoever should occur might be rigorously examined, after the exercise impending should be finished.

At the hour above mentioned I fell as into a deep sleep, and believed, indeed, at that time, and during the remaining part of the

same day, that I had been, not in the world, but in heaven, and that God had spoken to me, enlightening my understanding with an uncommon degree of clearness, and enlivening my love of eternal truth and righteousness.

I continued in that profound sleep from six in the morning, as above, to forty minutes past eight, not knowing where I was, but believing as above; but then I awoke, and looking about me, found that I was at a country lodging near Dublin, to which I had lately retired for the recovery of my health.

But although I awoke as above, yet I continued to be wholly inadvertent to worldly matters; but my attention was taken up, until about three in the afternoon of the same day, on certain extraordinary impressions which continued to be made on my mind: during which time I was under the most extreme degree of weakness and inexpressible languor; which, in the minutes I took, I find mentioned in the following pathetick expressions:

“ A weakness far greater than I had ever felt since I was born of a woman.” In the most extreme degree of which weakness, “ I took a bit of bread by God’s direction, and in my commerce among mortals in the world was never so much refreshed.”

And,

And, indeed, the impressi^on made on my bodily fabrick, by this extraordinary operation of the mind, was such, that it seemed scarce able to sustain ; and therefore I besought the Lord that he would be pleased to moderate the degrees thereof, so as to be suitable to my weakness, which appeared to me to have been instantly granted.

To describe distinctly in words what the several impressi^ons, made on my mind during the time above mentioned, were, is not in my power, either from any minutes I took, or from recollection^a : they seem to have been rather certain sensations, than argumentative propositions offered to the mind : thus much however is certain, that by virtue of those impressi^ons my heart was captivated with the love of God to a greater degree than ever in my life before, which uttered itself in several hymns of high praises, from a heart full of love and adoration ; the words of which I had not strength to minute down, nor could I recollect, as I did the following fervent

^a The relater of this event knows himself to be a Christian of very low degree, and as such presumes not to make the comparison of his experience to that of the saints of the Old or New Testament, any farther than to beg leave to refer the reader to 2 Cor. xii. 4. only as a proof that it is not impossible that the mind of man should be capable of being impressed by words not to be uttered.

resolution or vow, which was made, as in God's presence, on this occasion, viz.

“ O Lord, I will serve thee faithfully all the days of my life.”

The great consolation which attended this supposed extraordinary visitation of God, did not elevate the mind, but was accompanied with profound humility and self-abasement; and withal, what shall be ever memorable to me, an instantaneous change from a morose and perverse to a sweet state, and a certain superior and uncommon power supporting me under certain considerable cross accidents which befell me in the evening of the same day.

Is not here something above the power of nature? And, are there no wonders in grace as well as nature at this day? And if we call a miracle whatsoever exceeds the powers of nature, have not our modern Protestants been somewhat too hasty in their conclusions, when from their contempt of some false miracles which have been imposed on the credulous, they have with one voice cried out, That miracles are ceased since the days of the apostles?

Previous to, and in the intervals of, the above impressions on my mind, I was greatly distressed with innumerable, impetuous, and
ungovernable

ungovernable crowds of imaginations, which tortured me beyond expression; but, as a divine aid against those furious assaults, I was led to (what my education and former usage had never disposed me) a frequent repetition of the Lord's prayer, (which repetition was not *meerly mechanical*, but attended with proper reflections on the subject) and truly it proved a happy remedy accordingly, having been attended with a subsequent composure of those inordinate commotions; nor, indeed, (blessed be God) did they ever return from that to the present time, the 16th of the seventh month 1766.

This dream, vision, or extasy, was concluded with the following prayer: "O Lord God and Father of Spirits, who art omnipresent, I beseech thee to influence and sanctify my mind this day in the management of my temporal as well as spiritual affairs." Which petition is here inserted, because it seemed to have been remarkably answered on the evening of the same day, when it was observable that, notwithstanding my extreme feebleness of body, my imagination was quicker and more lively, and my understanding clearer than usual, even in the conduct of certain temporal affairs.

The next day, viz. on the 9th of the seventh month, I fell into a greater degree of sickness and dejection of mind than I had ever

ever experienced, which so far overwhelmed me that I began to stagger about, and repine at the ways of Providence, being entirely at a loss to conceive for what end this severe chastisement might be inflicted. I now forgot the particulars of the vision, and in vain endeavoured to recollect them; in short, was just upon the brink of pronouncing all to be chimera and the meer effect of vapours, whereupon I became very disconsolate. I determined however, at all events, to take a little bodily refreshment after my long fasting and extreme sickness, and hereupon reviewing this matter a little, divers of the above particulars were renewed in my memory, and I became a believer again, and made the following reflections on the above account:

I. I am very conscious of the truth of the apostolick observation, that we “here see but through a glass darkly,” and that “we know but in part, and prophesy but in part;” and from a yet greater authority I learn, that “the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit.”

It is certain that the relater of the above events was led into the frame of mind he has described, not by any premeditation or forecast of his own, but involuntarily, as by some foreign agent, being passive rather than active,

active, with respect to the impressions received. He is particularly inclined to believe that the means suggested to him, by way of preservative from that state of his mind, which, upon cool reflection, seems to have bordered on madness, are an instance of a Particular Providence interposing for his relief; and the rather because this means, viz. a repetition of the Lord's prayer, was quite out of the road of the usage of the people, among whom his religious converse had always been, who are well known for their disuse of all forms of prayer.

And if it should so happen that this account should fall into the hands of any of the medical fraternity, who are no great believers in Particular Providences, but rather inclined to solve all appearances in nature and grace into the operation of the mechanick laws established for the good of the universe, it is recommended to their consideration, whether, besides what is above alleged in favour of a Particular Providence, the instantaneous change of temper from a morose and perverse to a sweet state above observed, and which was more than what was ever experienced by the relater before, (though not a stranger to the spiritual warfare) being unhappily possessed of a certain native ferocity which had never entirely given way to his ordinary exercises in prayer and meditation until the present extraordinary irradiation; whether, I say,

say, this do not exceed the ordinary powers of nature, is recommended to their consideration: and if they allow this, they may possibly advance a step further, and consider how far the answer of the prayer above related may imply a supernatural interposition; and, indeed, I would query, What is all prayer but a solemn mockery of God, if there be no such interposition in consequence thereof?

II. The signal affliction attended with the great depression and dejection of mind, which succeeded the consolations preceding, was such, that it renewed to the relater's memory a saying he had heard formerly among some spiritual men, that "The way to heaven lies by the gates of hell:" however, upon cool reflection, he became reconciled to this great affliction, even as unto a wholesome chastisement or spiritual discipline administered by the heavenly Father for a good end, even (if it might be lawful for a Christian of low degree to make the comparison) for an end similar to that for which "a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him who was caught up into the third heaven," viz. "lest he should be exalted above measure." And, indeed, this severe dispensation had assuredly this good effect upon the relater, that he thereby obtained such a clear and lively sense of his own weakness as never attended him before; and which he humbly hopes will attend him during the residue of his pilgrimage,

mage, as a spiritual antidote to preserve from the snares of sin and death. Amen!

The review and lively sense of these things, produced the following address to Almighty God on the 11th day of the seventh month:

“O eternal God and Father of Spirits, I bless thee, even for thy ministrations of affliction, which have been ever tempered with mercy and goodness. Evermore support under my weakness, and may I be preserved in a sense thereof; and may I fulfil the vow which I made!

I now triumph in thy succeeding dispensation of love and unutterable goodness which thou hast vouchsafed to me, an unworthy sinful man, whom thou hast purged and sanctified: Lord, preserve me clean! Thou, the Physician of soul and body, hast healed the infirmities of both. Behold, I return cheerfully, at thy command, to the affairs of this life, equally resigned for heaven or earth.”

And on the 13th of the same month, the following triumphant soliloquies and solemn vow were uttered:

“My peace and joy flows as a river, a joy equal to which I never felt before, so solid, so steady, so rational.”

“O Lord,

“ O Lord, I have made an everlasting covenant with thee, which all the powers of hell and darkness shall never be able to dissolve. Amen !”

“ I have now a prospect of a delectable old age, blessed be the Lord ! for all cause of trouble and the sting of death is taken away.”

A remarkable epocha in the annals of my life.

III. I make no doubt but that if this narrative should fall into the hands of men professing great skill in the mysteries of nature, but having little experience of either fasting or prayer, it would be instantly thrown away, and pronounced with contempt what they call visionary indeed, as having the genuine marks of a mind disordered by bodily weakness and long fasting: and, indeed, according to the relater's own feelings of his state during the above presentations to his mind, his soul seemed, in the extreme weakness he has above mentioned, to have been very near quitting its tenement: and how far such a state of body may be consistent with any extraordinary communications of God with man remains now to be considered.

It seems clear that man in his present mortal state is utterly incapable of the beatifick vision :

vision : for God saith unto Moses, (Exodus xxxiii.) “Thou canst not see my face : for there shall no man see me and live.—And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by, and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts ; but my face shall not be seen.” And to this agrees the declaration of the apostle, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; but this mortal must put on immortality, and this natural must be raised a spiritual body” before it can be capable of partaking of the glories of the heavenly state.

In the mean time, I shall give an authentick instance, from the holy records, of a state of the most extreme weakness of body being no way inconsistent with, but rather a proper preparative for, the reception of extraordinary communications of God with man : which instance is here produced, not to make any comparison of the relater of this narrative with the prophet, either with respect to his dignity in the favour of heaven, or the subjects of which the prophet treats (being of a publick nature, whereas these are of a meerly private one, respecting the author himself, and published for no other reason than as some sort of evidence of God’s communing with man ;) but the design of giving this instance is, to shew the fallacy of the reasoning

B

of

of such as conclude instantly from a state of great weakness of body, that, whatsoever supposed revelations may be pretended, they are merely imaginary.

Now we find upon an important occasion of this kind, the prophet Daniel, in the tenth chapter, thus describing his state: *verf. 2, &c.* "In those days I Daniel was mourning full three weeks, I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth—till three whole weeks were fulfilled: and in the four and twentieth day of the first month, I lifted up mine eyes, and behold a certain man clothed in linen—his face was as the appearance of lightening—and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel saw this vision, and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength: yet I heard the voice of his words—and was in a deep sleep, and my face toward the ground: and behold an hand touched me which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands: and he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved—fear not: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."

This seems to furnish an opportunity for making a few observations on the practice of fasting,

fasting, as a religious duty; and to this I am induced by observing that the protestants of our time, whilst they have cried down by wholesale the fasting and some other austerities practised in the church of Rome, have themselves fallen into an opposite and worse extreme, the indulgence of the flesh; so that perhaps it may, with too much truth, be affirmed, that some of these in this island are the most pampered generation under heaven; one cause no doubt of the many moral evils that abound among them, amidst all their boasts of reformation: and shall I say, that this practice of fasting is grown quite obsolete among some of the most refined of the protestant denomination, even such who by their profession lay claim to a higher degree of spirituality, and whose ancestors, as appears upon record, did exercise fasting as a religious duty on particular occasions, and among whom it was an ancient and highly commendable custom on the days devoted to solemn worship, to make fleshly gratification give way, agreeable to the injunction given by the Lord to Aaron and his sons, Lev. x. 9, 10, 11. "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die:" and the reason given for it, as applicable to the Christian congregations, shews the perpetuity of the obligation of the precept, viz. "That ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean,

and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them :” but this is now utterly neglected by too many of the descendents of those men, by whom there hath been too much occasion administered for the sarcasm, that under a pretence of conscientiously refusing to obey the ordinances of men, with respect to stated times of fasting and praying, they have almost forgotten either to fast or to pray at all.

I therefore deem it not unseasonable to endeavour to corroborate the hints above given, by shewing that the practice of fasting as a religious duty, howsoever become obsolete among the greater part of Protestants of every denomination, is strongly recommended both by precept and example, even in the New Testament as well as the old, and that it was a frequent practice, and ordinarily on solemn occasions joined to prayer.

The first instance that occurs to this purpose is at the first glorious introduction of the gospel-day into the Gentile world, even in the persons of Peter the apostle, and Cornelius the devout centurion and first eminent Gentile convert, whose conversion was introduced by prayer joined to fasting: see Acts x. that it was when Peter went up to the housetop to pray, and was hungry, that he saw the vision of the four-cornered sheet; and Cornelius, who gave much alms to the people,
and

and prayed to God always, had been four days fasting when he came to Peter, prepared to receive the gospel-message and gift of the Holy Ghost, which was conferred on him, and them that were present with him.

And that this was not a singular case, but that fasting was ordinarily practised as a religious duty and joined to prayer, is evident from the following texts, Acts xiii. 23. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." And Acts xiv. 23. "When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed."

Nor was this practice peculiar to ministers, but recommended also to Christians in private stations, even to husbands and wives: for the apostle saith, 1 Cor. vii. 5. "Defraud not one the other except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer."

If then fasting in conjunction with prayer be properly recommended, even to experienced and faithful Christians in all stations, as a means of humiliation in their approaches to Almighty God, how much more necessary

is it for men drowned in sensuality, who make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, whose understandings are darkened, and their passions inflamed by excess of drinking? For, indeed, where habits of this kind have been contracted, and are become inveterate, it is not an ordinary effusion of prayer, but (even as our Lord said, concerning that rebellious spirit which the disciples could not cast out, Mat. xvii. Mark ix. "This kind cometh not forth but by fasting and prayer") the flesh must be subdued by fasting, self-denial, and affliction of soul, under a sense of the guilt of the sin: and upon this occasion, the relater of the above narrative begs leave solemnly to profess and declare, that with regard to that sin of his bosom which most easily besetted him, he never, in the course of meditation and prayer for several years, found so complete a victory over it, as upon the fasting and great bodily weakness above mentioned: from whence he first learned, that fasting occasionally, and prudently practised, is a most wholesome discipline for the soul, and a powerful means of humbling and subduing the flesh.

I shall conclude with a short paraphrase on the Lord's prayer.

"Our Father:"

Make us thy children by regeneration.

"Hallowed

“ Hallowed be thy name :”

May we honour thee in an open and publick profession and confession of thee before men, and in our zeal and diligence in publick worship as well as private.

“ Thy kingdom come :”

Both in the hearts of us who profess the religion of Jesus ; and may it be extended throughout the world : put an end to war, and hasten the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Christ.

“ Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven :”

Even perfectly, in doing what thou commandest, and suffering patiently whatsoever thou permittest to befall us.

“ Give us this day our daily bread :”

Even for the support of our bodies, and of our souls in the hour of temptation.

“ Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive,”
&c.

Our secret sins of omission and commission discovered by thy light have been more than the hairs of our head, and bear no proportion to the trespasses of our brethren against us. We therefore forgive them, as thou hast commanded.

“ Lead

"Lead us not into temptation:"

May we studiously decline and shun the occasions of temptation and sin!

"Thine is the kingdom, power and glory:"

We are thy subjects, Lord of heaven and earth: glory belongs to thee, not unto us, but shame and confusion of faces.

7 AP 66

E L N I S

BOOKS printed : And sold by JAMES
PHILLIPS, in George-Yard, Lombard-Street.

A Spiritual Diary and Soliloquies, by
John Ruty, M. D. late of Dublin:
In 2 Vols. Price bound 6s.

The History of the Rise, Increase, and
Progress of the Christian People called Qua-
kers, intermixed with several remarkable Oc-
currences ; written originally in Low Dutch,
and also translated into English, by William
Sewel. Price bound 14s.

A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress
of the People called Quakers, in which their
fundamental Principle, Doctrines, Worship,
Ministry, and Discipline, are plainly declared.
With a summary Relation of the former Dis-
pensations of God in the World, by Way of
of Introduction, by William Penn. Price
bound 1s.

A Journal, or Historical Account of the
Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Expe-
riences, and Labours in the Work of the
Ministry of that ancient, eminent, and faithful
Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox. Price
bound 18s.

No Cross, No Crown. A Discourse, shew-
ing the Nature and Discipline of the Cross of
Christ ; and that the Denial of Self, and daily
bearing of Christ's Cross, is the alone Way
to the Rest and Kingdom of God, by William
Penn, Price bound 4s.

Fruits

BOOKS printed : And sold, &c.

Fruits of Solitude, in Reflections and Maxims relating to the Conduct of Human Life, in two Parts, by William Penn, Price bound 2s.

A Description of Guinea, its Situation, Produce, and the general Disposition of its Inhabitants ; with an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, its Nature and lamentable Effects, by Anthony Benezet. Price bound 3s. or sewed 2s. 6d.

The Grounds of a Holy Life ; or the Way by which many, who were Heathens, came to be renowned Christians ; and such, who are now Sinners, may come to be numbered with Saints, by little Preaching. To which is added, Paul's Speech to the Bishop of Crete ; as also a true Touchstone, or Trial of Christianity, by Hugh Turford. Price bound 1s.

The Works of John Woolman, containing a Journal of his Life, Gospel-Labours, and Christian Experiences ; with Considerations on Pure Wisdom and Human Policy ; on Labour ; on Schools ; and on the right Use of the Lord's outward Gifts ; together with his last Epistle, in two Parts. Price bound 3s. 6d.

Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of the People called Quakers, held in London, to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great Britain, Ireland, and elsewhere, from the Year 1675 to 1759 inclusive, with an Index to the principal Subjects of Advice. Price in boards 4s.

The

BOOKS printed: And sold, &c.

The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood; containing an Account of his Birth, Education, &c. with divers Observations on his Life and Manners when a Youth, and how he came to be convinced of the Truth; with his Services and Sufferings for the same; and several other remarkable Occurences. Price bound 3s. 6d.

An Account of the Life and Travels in the Work of the Ministry of John Fothergill; to which are added, Divers Epistles to Friends in Great-Britain and America on various occasions. Price bound 3s. 6d.

A Collection of the Works of that ancient faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, Thomas Chalkley; to which is prefixed, A Journal of his Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences, written by himself. Price bound 4s. 6d.

The Life and Posthumous Works of Richard Claridge, being Memoirs of his Experiences and Progress in Religion, his Changes in Opinion, and Reasons for them; with Essays in Defence of several Principles and Practices of the People called Quakers, Collected by Joseph Besse. Price bound 5s.

A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers for the Testimony of a good Conscience, from the Time of their being first distinguished by that Name in the Year 1650, to the Time of the Act, commonly called the Act of Toleration, granted to Protestant Dissenters, in the first Year of the Reign of King William the Third, and Queen Mary, in the Year 1689, in Two Vols. Price bound 26s.